

Critical Analysis of Matthew Lipman's Multidimensional Thinking In Philosophy for Children (P4C) from The Perspective of Islamic Thought

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Abstract

*This study employs a critical descriptive-comparative approach to examine Matthew Lipman's concept of multidimensional thinking in Philosophy for Children (P4C) from the perspective of Islamic thought. In the context of global education that prioritizes STEAM disciplines to promote Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), Lipman's framework highlights critical, creative, and caring thinking as core dimensions. However, Islamic epistemology offers a more holistic understanding of thought. Using qualitative analysis, this study first reconstructs Lipman's ideas based on *Thinking in Education and Philosophy Goes to School*, alongside classical Islamic concepts of 'aql (intellect), qalb (heart), and nafs (soul). A comparative analysis is conducted to identify key similarities and differences, followed by a critical evaluation of the epistemological limitations of Lipman's model. The findings indicate that, in Islam, thinking transcends rational processes and encompasses spiritual and ethical dimensions. While Lipman's model is valuable in cultivating reflective thinking, it remains largely secular. Islam, by contrast, integrates reason, intuition, and divine consciousness. This study concludes that multidimensional thinking in Islam reflects*

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*the principle of *tawhīd al-‘ilm*, offering a more integrated framework that unifies intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of knowledge.*

Keywords: *Matthew Lipman; Philosophy for Children; Multidimensional Thinking; Islamic Thought.*

Abstrak

*Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kritis deskriptif-komparatif untuk mengkaji konsep berpikir multidimensional Matthew Lipman dalam Philosophy for Children (P4C) dari perspektif pemikiran Islam. Dalam konteks pendidikan global yang menekankan disiplin STEAM untuk mendorong Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), kerangka Lipman menempatkan berpikir kritis, kreatif, dan peduli sebagai dimensi utama. Namun demikian, epistemologi Islam menawarkan pemahaman berpikir yang lebih holistik. Melalui analisis kualitatif, penelitian ini terlebih dahulu merekonstruksi gagasan Lipman berdasarkan *Thinking in Education* dan *Philosophy Goes to School*, serta konsep-konsep klasik Islam mengenai ‘aql (akal), qalb (hati), dan nafs (jiwa). Selanjutnya, dilakukan analisis komparatif untuk mengidentifikasi persamaan dan perbedaan utama, yang kemudian dilanjutkan dengan evaluasi kritis terhadap keterbatasan epistemologis model Lipman. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam Islam, berpikir tidak hanya bersifat rasional, tetapi juga mencakup dimensi spiritual dan etis. Meskipun model Lipman berkontribusi dalam mengembangkan pemikiran reflektif, pendekatannya cenderung sekuler. Sebaliknya, Islam mengintegrasikan akal, intuisi, dan kesadaran ilahiah. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa berpikir multidimensional dalam Islam mencerminkan prinsip *tawhīd al-‘ilm*, yang memadukan dimensi intelektual, moral, dan spiritual dalam satu kerangka pengetahuan yang utuh.*

Kata Kunci: *Matthew Lipman; Philosophy for Children; Pemikiran Multidimensi; Pemikiran Islam.*

Introduction

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is a program approach to developing critical thinking initiated by Matthew Lipman.¹ This program is an application of teaching his concept of multidimensional thinking. Alternatively, P4C is an approach to

¹ Rosnani. Naji, Saeed Hashim, “History, Theory and Practice of Philosophy for Children: International Perspectives,” *Routledge Research in Education*, 2017, 28.

cultivating higher-order thinking from an early age of 5-18.² This program recognizes that schools and parents play an essential role in cultivating children to think well and correctly.³ It began with P4C founder Matthew Lipman's concern about his students' low levels of critical thinking. He argued that critical thinking should start early. In the end, he and his colleague Ann Sharp and other colleagues founded the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) at Montclair University, New Jersey, USA, in the 1970s.⁴

Phenomenologically, contemporary education reveals a gap between its normative goals, namely, the development of critical, creative, and reflective thinking, and actual classroom practices, which remain largely transmissive and oriented toward rote memorization.⁵ This condition renders students relatively passive and weak in argumentative reasoning, particularly within a digital environment saturated with misinformation and cognitive bias. From a theoretical perspective, this problem stems from an epistemological paradigm that treats knowledge as static and linearly transferable, thereby neglecting its constructive and dialogical nature.⁶ Empirical studies indicate that the Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach is effective in enhancing critical thinking, reasoning,

² Wahab, M. K. A., Zulkifli, H., & Razak, K. A. (2022). Impact of Philosophy for Children and Its Challenges: A Systematic Review. *Children*, 9(11), 1671. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children9111671>.

³ Građzka, E. (2025). Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp: Philosophy for Children's Educational Revolution (Book Review). *Journal of Philosophy in Schools*, 12(2), 204–209. <https://doi.org/10.46707/e8jctx72>.

⁴ Şişman, Z. B., Ünlü, İ., & Kaşkaya, A. (2026). Effects of Philosophy for Children on Democratic Citizenship Perception: A Mixed-Methods Experimental Study. *Sage Open*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440261418832>.

⁵ Akan R., Çüçen A. (2023). The interrelation between Philosophy for Children (P4C) and creative thinking. *Balkan Journal of Philosophy*, 15(1), 35–40. <https://doi.org/10.5840/bjp20231515>.

⁶ Caiyun Wei and Lele Chen (2025). The Effects of Philosophy for Children on Children's Cognitive Development: A Three-Level Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Intelligence*, 13(10), 130. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence13100130>.

and reflective capacities through philosophical dialogue and the community of inquiry model, and has been shown to improve the quality of students' argumentation and participation in learning processes.⁷

Accordingly, transformation within the educational order becomes imperative, not only at the curricular and methodological levels but also at the paradigmatic level.⁸ The mismatch between 21st-century demands, particularly the emphasis on higher-order thinking skills, and conventional educational practices necessitates a shift toward thinking-centered education. Recent studies demonstrate that P4C has a significant impact on cognitive development, including critical thinking, creativity, and reasoning, with moderate to strong empirical effects, while also fostering democratic awareness and reflective thinking.⁹ Therefore, educational transformation is essential to address both epistemological and practical crises in learning, ensuring that education fosters individuals who are not only cognitively competent but also intellectually and ethically mature.

Lipman is known as someone eager to bring new changes to the world of education in terms of ethics and thinking skills.¹⁰ He proposes a more egalitarian approach, moving from emphasizing only the cognitive dimension as in traditional Western civilization to a balance of cognitive and affective dimensions called Multidimensional Thinking. This includes the cognitive dimension

⁷ Balcı E., Eryılmaz R. (2024). The impact of Philosophy for Children (P4C) activities on enhancing the speaking skills of gifted students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, Article 1451532. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1451532>.

⁸ K.J. Topping, S. Trickey, (2014). The role of dialog in philosophy for children, *International Journal of Educational Research*, 63, 69-78, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2013.01.002>.

⁹ Jirásek I., Jágerová K. (2023). Czech primary school teachers' experience with the Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 54(1), 37–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2023.2255540>.

¹⁰ Roger Matthew Lipman Sutcliffe, "Thinking Skills and Creativity(1923–2010)," 2011, 3.

of critical thinking, which emphasizes reasoning; creative thinking, which focuses on inventiveness; and Caring Thinking, which emphasizes ethical values and emotions.¹¹

P4C is an established classroom practice that has been researched and monitored for over 30 years. It utilizes whole-class interaction as well as pair and small-group work. P4C is a popular classroom learning approach in over 50 countries. It believes that student growth and understanding are most effectively achieved through student-to-student discussion, facilitated by the teacher. An impressive body of research evidence shows how P4C affects in language and education.¹²

This study aims to critically analyze the concept of multidimensional thinking within the Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach developed by Matthew Lipman, through a comparative framework between Western and Islamic worldviews, particularly concerning the concepts of 'aql (intellect) and science, as well as their implications for higher-order thinking. The research questions address: (1) how multidimensional thinking is constructed within P4C; (2) how the concepts of 'aql and science differ between Islamic and Western traditions; and (3) how such differences may be integrated within the context of Muslim education in Indonesia. This study employs a qualitative library research approach, utilizing philosophical, conceptual, and comparative analyses of the works of Matthew Lipman and relevant literature in Islamic epistemology, in order to identify differences, convergences, and potential pathways for conceptual integration.

¹¹ Harry Annison, "Matthew Lipman Thinking In Education," *Cambridge University Press*, 2011, 4.

¹² Sue Lyle, "Dialogic Teaching: Discussing Theoretical Contexts and Reviewing Evidence from Classroom Practice," *Language and Education* 22 no. 3 (2008): 236.

Matthew Lipman Intellectual Biography

Matthew Lipman is a Professor of Philosophy at Montclair State University, New Jersey. Previously, he served as a professor of philosophy at Columbia University for 18 years. He has consulted for the US Department of Education, ASCD, NJ Education, and UNESCO.¹³ He was an American philosopher and educator born in Vineland, New Jersey, on August 24, 1923. His parents were Russian Jewish immigrants who came to America in the early 1900s. He died at 87 in West Orange, New Jersey, just after the celebration of Christmas in 2010 and died after battling Parkinson's Disease for many years.¹⁴

Meanwhile, Lipman could not continue his studies at university during his educational journey due to his family's deteriorating condition. However, in the end, he got several scholarships and continued his education at Stanford University for two terms. At this time, he first became acquainted with philosophy, especially the philosophy of John Dewey, which became a collection of his pocketbooks. He was taken to the battlefields in Europe during the final stages of World War II, and this was his first experience in military service. After returning to the United States, Lipman continued his philosophy studies at Columbia University and met Dewey, who had retired from Columbia by then. Lipman's graduate years also involved study in Europe as a Fulbright scholar. Although Dewey had died by the time Lipman returned to Columbia as a young academic, his influence was still strong, and Lipman respected him deeply.¹⁵

Due to his close relationship with Dewey, Lipman is often seen as the successor to Dewey's thinking, especially in his

¹³ Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, second (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.

¹⁴ Roger Sutcliffe, "Obituary Matthew Lipman (1923–2010)," *Elsevier: Thinking Skills and Creativity* 6 no. 3 (n.d.): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2011.08.001>.

¹⁵ Philip Cam, "Matthew Lipman (1923–2010)," *Diogenes, University of New South Wales* 58, No. 4 (2011): 3.

philosophy of pragmatism and his understanding of education.¹⁶ Since John Dewey developed his ideas about the philosophy of education, many things have changed in philosophy and the world. Likewise, a lot has changed since Matthew Lipman started the *Philosophy for Children* program, based on his understanding of Dewey's criticism of educational practices and philosophy at that time. Thus, at least some contemporary philosophers have recognized the connection between Dewey's approach and the needs of contemporary philosophy.¹⁷

Lipman's opinion on the state of Traditional Education

Schooling without thinking Lipman's criticism of the condition of the traditional school system in America is quite worrying. The insistence on order and discipline could destroy the spontaneity children most want to develop and value.¹⁸ In his works *Thinking in Education* and *Philosophy Goes to School*, Matthew Lipman advocates significant transformations in education by returning it to its fundamental aim—namely, fostering better thinking, particularly reflective thinking.¹⁹

Lipman believes that traditional education needs to be fixed toward educational goals. Text-based, fact-based education and a separate curriculum impact students' thinking skills. Apart from that, the broader impact of educational dysfunction is inequality in access to and quality of education, as well as economic and income inequality. Various social groups have significant income differences, which impact their access to education and learning opportunities. In some places, children may be forced to work

¹⁶ Robert Ginsberg et Al, *Pragmatism, Education, and Children* (New York: Rodopi, 2008), 143.

¹⁷ Rosalind Ekman Ladd, *Dewey and Lipman, in Pragmatism, Education, and Children* (Brill, 2008), 153–54.

¹⁸ Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 14.

¹⁹ Lipman, Matthew. *Philosophy Goes to School*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988, 12-20.

to help their families, which reduces the time and energy they can spend on education. Family and community structures are also influenced by social changes, such as urbanization and migration from rural to urban areas, affecting education. Migrant children often face additional difficulties in adapting to new social environments and educational systems. Even though educational researchers offer remedial solutions to this condition, Lipman believes these solutions only patch external wounds and do not address internal problems.²⁰

Multidimensional Thinking as Lipman’s Breakthrough in Teaching Critical Thinking

Lipman uses a reflective rather than traditional educational paradigm.²¹ In the standard paradigm, knowledge is pure and permanent. Meanwhile, in the reflective paradigm, knowledge is problematic and tentative.²² He defines reflective thinking as thinking with many dimensions. Multidimensional thinking is a profound combination of critical, creative, and caring thinking.²³ Then, he developed a well-known program, Philosophy For Children (P4C), which focuses on the “Community of Inquiry,” an environment designed to foster multidimensional thinking, considered the ultimate goal of education in a democratic society.²⁴

²⁰ Frederick S. Oscanayan, *Matthew Lipman, Ann Marbaret Sharp, Philosophy in the Classroom*, 2nd ed (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 25.

²¹ Matthew Lipman, “Brave Old Subject, Brave New World; History, Theory, and Practice of Philosophy for Children: International Perspectives,” n.d., 13.

²² Jed Stone, “Questioning Education a Critique of Philosophy for Children,” *Institute of Education, University of London*, n.d., 33.

²³ Aminurrashid Ahmad Dahari, Asmawati Suhid, and Fathiyah Fakhruhin. “Implementation Critical Thinking in Teaching Islamic Education.” *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development* 8 no. 4, no. 805–23 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v8-i4/6756>.

²⁴ Hannu Juuso, *Child, Philosophy and Education: Discussing The Intellectual Sources of Philosophy for Children* (Finland: Oulu University Press, 2007), 176.

Lipman created two assessment criteria (Judgment) for critical thinking. First: “mega-criteria” and second, “meta-criteria.” Truth, goodness, and beauty are mega-criteria, while reliability, strength, relevance, coherence, precision, and consistency are meta-criteria.²⁵ Lipman lays down these mega standards for determining goodness and truth. Truth is usually considered to be intra- or intersubjective. For him, there is no clear, accurate, or solid truth. As a result, P4C encourages freedom of thought.²⁶ Lipman also has relative value standards; he said each person and culture has a different view of values.²⁷ As Aristo thinks, ethics is a realm of probability in which goodness occurs across contexts and cannot be understood in a single sense.²⁸

The final value in the dialectical process in P4C here is “reasonableness” which strongly connects with Aristotle’s concept of Phronesis. Phronesis is practical wisdom developed only through a lifetime of experience, and such reflection is *common sense*, which is one *intellectual virtue*. This does not only involve theoretical knowledge. This phronesis includes *boules* (liberation), *synthesis* (understanding), *gnome* (assessment), *epieikeia* (equality), and *sinus* (sympathy).²⁹ *Reasonableness* reflects the Aristotelian concept of phronesis, namely, practical wisdom. In teaching children, the philosophical context need not be rational but rather reasonable. This reasonableness is not just discovered by one person but will be forged through critical discussion tests by other participants and even the teacher.³⁰ Although Lipman does not mention this

²⁵ Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 215.

²⁶ Maughn Gregory, “Philosophy for Children and Its Critics: A Mendham Dialogue,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* No. 2, no. 45 (2011): 112.

²⁷ Rosnani Hashim. Wan Mazwati Wan Yusoff, *Doing Philosophy for Wisdom in Islamic Education* (Gombak: IUM Press, 2022), 72.

²⁸ Juice, “Child, Philosophy and Education: Discussing The Intellectual Sources of Philosophy for Children,” n.d., 140.

²⁹ Juice, 146.

³⁰ Juice, 144.

directly, it is reflected in his book *Philosophy Goes to School*, 378, and *Thinking in Education*, 379.

The main principle of constructivist pedagogy is that students build knowledge through active interaction with their lessons and environment. Experience is a source of procedural knowledge that, in constructivist epistemology, is needed in addition to declarative knowledge.³¹

In P4C, epistemology is inspired by the works of Descartes and Kant and Peirce and Dewey's criticism of Hegel's epistemological thought—dualism in the philosophical heritage of Plato and Aristotle, such as physical and metaphysical. This gave birth to modernists such as Kant and Descartes, at least Kant still believed in things that were a priori or the world of ideas, but he thought that human reason was limited to thinking about metaphysical things. What is needed is a critical philosophy that does not speculate on metaphysical matters, although speculating does not claim truth about them.³² Descartes considered himself a thinking entity, a solid basis for knowledge, with his famous adage "Cogito Ergo Sum." He argued that thoughts, not experience, form knowledge.³³ Meanwhile, Kant argued that both external phenomena and noumena influence knowledge.³⁴

As a pragmatist, Charles Sanders Peirce emphasized the importance of empirical experience and scientific methods in the construction of knowledge, particularly through inquiry, experimentation, and the logic of science.³⁵ He argued that

³¹ Muthu Kumar, "Constructivist Epistemology in Action," *The Journal of Educational Thought (JET) Revue de La Pensée Éducative* 40, No. 3 (2006): 248.

³² Wan Mazwati Wan Yusoff, *Doing Philosophy for Wisdom in Islamic Education*, 28.

³³ René Descartes, *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings*, ed. R. Stoothoff & D. Murdoch J. References Cottingham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

³⁴ Muhammad Muslih, *Filsafat Ilmu* (Yogyakarta: Lesfi, 2019), 61–76.

³⁵ Charles Sanders Peirce. The Fixation of Belief. Dalam Nathan Houser dan Christian Kloesel (eds.), *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, Volume 1 (1867–1893). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992, 109–123. See also: Hookway, Christopher. *The Pragmatic Maxim: Essays on Peirce and Pragmatism*.

concepts should be tested and validated through objective scientific approaches and empirical experience. Reliance on metaphysical speculation: John Dewey opposed Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's approach, which he regarded as overly speculative and metaphysical, and instead advocated a pragmatic, experience-based philosophy.³⁶ He argues that this approach ignores the importance of concrete experience and experimentation for gaining helpful knowledge that supports everyday life. Dewey emphasized the scientific method and empirical experience in building valuable knowledge for everyday life. Dewey focused more on knowledge that could contribute to social improvement and enhance the quality of individual life, emphasizing the practical and experiential dimensions of learning³⁷. In essence, this pragmatic epistemology prioritizes experience, adopting a new style: a philosophical approach to context.

In the end, the aim of Lipman's critical position, as discussed in Susan T. Gardner (1995), is not to endorse relativism but to avoid it. Within P4C, inquiry is directed toward the pursuit of truth through reasoned judgment; thus, unreasonable opinions are not simply accepted but are critically examined and evaluated within *a community of inquiry*.³⁸ However, P4C is not absolute in its epistemology; truth is generally considered intra/intersubjective. There is no known, specific, authoritative Truth. Therefore, P4C fosters freedom of thought. In this context, P4C is referred to as Postmodernism.³⁹ According to Philip Cam's *Every Inquiry*, the

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

³⁶ John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty*. New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1929, 20–35; See also: Westbrook, Robert B. *John Dewey and American Democracy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, 78–82.

³⁷ John Dewey, *Experience and Education*. New York: Macmillan, 1938, 18-25. see also: Biesta, Gert. *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2010, 1-5.

³⁸ Susan T. Gardner. *Inquiry Is No Mere Conversation: Facilitation of Inquiry Is Hard Work!*. Montclair, NJ: Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, 1995, 38.

³⁹ Gregory, "Philosophy for Children and Its Critics: A Mendham Dialogue," 211

goal is truth, but in p4c, the goal is freedom.⁴⁰

Indeed, several figures became his inspiration, such as John Dewey, Hegel, Kant, and Michel Foucault, who has a background in continental philosophy. Continental philosophy emphasizes issues such as phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, deconstruction, and criticism of rationality and modernity. Foucault frequently challenges conventional understandings of reality, knowledge, and even language.⁴¹

Analysis of the Concept of Thinking in Islamic Thought

According to Majid Fakhri, thinking is about everything, high and low, universally, not only about knowledge but also about being.⁴² According to Rosnani, critical thinking aligns with human nature because philosophical questions about existence are the basis of human needs.⁴³ Thinking (*natiqiyah*) is the difference (*fashl*) that distinguishes humans from animals and other creatures because humans are *nathiq* creatures. In the case of al Attas, human nature is defined as spiritual. So, critical thinking or higher-Order thinking relates to human nature, namely spirituality.⁴⁴ In this case, it will be related to at least three main Islamic concepts: soul (*nafs*), heart (*qalb*), and “*‘aql*”. *‘Aql* and *qalb* are responsible for the level of a person’s psychological values.⁴⁵ It is a metaphysical or spiritual entity with knowledge referred to as supra-rational. Knowledge and the

⁴⁰ Cam, “Matthew Lipman (1923–2010),” 2.

⁴¹ Jennifer Rothschild, “A History of Western Philosophy of Education in Antiquity,” *Philosophical Inquiry in Education* No. 2, no. 29 (2022): 159.

⁴² Majid Fakhri, “A History of Islamic Philosophy,” *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, no. 3d Ed (2004): 31.

⁴³ Hashim, Rosnani. “Rethinking Islamic Education in Facing the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century.” *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 22, no. 4 (2005): 44–61. <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajiss.v22i4.451>.

⁴⁴ SMN. Al-Attas, *On Justice and The Nature of Man: A Commentary of Surah An-Nisa(4):58 and Surah Al-Mukminun(23)* (Kuala Lumpur: Ta’dib International, 2020), iv.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Ismail, *Menalar Makna Berpikir Dalam Al-Qur’an* (Ponorogo: Unida Press, 2016), 62.

actions that is produced from it cannot necessarily be considered irrational or non-rational.⁴⁶ According to Ar Razi, although all three have one meaning, namely *nafs* or soul, each has a different role and purpose.⁴⁷

According to some commentators (*Mufassir*), we will see the meaning of the three words above in terms of terminology. According to Abu Hayyan and ar-Razi, the word “nafs” in surah as-Syams, verse 7, means the completion of the soul’s creation. According to Maturidi⁴⁸ and Samarqandi⁴⁹ *nafs* a person who is given the responsibility and ability to know good and evil, obedience, and immorality. The soul is a thinking tool with powers like imagining, remembering, reasoning, etc.

According to Abu Hayyan,⁵⁰ in surah al-Hajj verse 46, Qalb means a place of thinking; he does not eliminate the connection between the heart (spiritual) and the brain (rational). If the mind, which is the nature of the heart, is damaged, then the brain will also be damaged. Not far from the meaning given by Abu Hayyan, Maturidi⁵¹ Samarqandi⁵² Qusyairi⁵³ and ar-Razi⁵⁴ they also agree that the heart is the actual seat of reasoning; in other words, it is a source of intuitive knowledge that sees the world with *nūr al-yaqīn* (mind's eye).

⁴⁶ Mohd Zaidi Ismail, *Islam & Higher Order Thinking: An Overview* (Kuala Lumpur: IKIM, 2018), 9.

⁴⁷ Jarman Arroisi, *Islamic Psychology: Reading the Anatomy of Thought of the Soul of Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi* (Ponorogo: Unida Press, 2022), 132.

⁴⁸ Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi, *Tafsir Al-Maturidi- Ta'wilat Ablul Sunnah*, Juz 10 (Beirut: Dar-al-Kitab Ilmiah, 1433), 542.

⁴⁹ Abu Laits Nasr Abu Muhammad bin Ibrahim As-Samarqandi, *Babrul Ulum*, Volume 3 (Beirut: Dar-alkitab Ilmiah, 1431), 595.

⁵⁰ Atsiruddin, *Tafsir Babrul Mubith*, 251.

⁵¹ Al-Maturidi, *Tafsir Al-Maturidi- Ta'wilat Ablul Sunnah*, 429.

⁵² Abu Laits Nasr Abu Muhammad bin Ibrahim As-Samarqandi, *Babrul Ulum*, 469.

⁵³ Abdul Karim bin Hawazin bin Abdul Mulki Al-Qusyairi, *Lathaif Al-Isharat*, Volume 2 (Egypt: Hayyiah Misriyah, 1431), 552.

⁵⁴ Ar-Razi, *Tafsir Kabir-Mafatihul Ghaib*, 234.

According to Abu Hayyan⁵⁵ al-Maraghi⁵⁶ and Imam Naisaburi⁵⁷ in surat al-Baqoroh, verse 44, *aqal* is referred to as reason because it directs people towards goodness and prevents them from all kinds of destruction or loss, like a shepherd tying his camel so that it does not escape, because loss is a form of loss for humans. According to Isfahani in his book *al-Mufradat fi al-Gharib al-quran*, "aqal" and constipation, "restrain," and "bind," have the same meanings.⁵⁸

Because the heart is a soft, robbaniyah substance, Imam al-Ghazali considers the concept of *qalb* to be spiritual.⁵⁹ He thinks, understands, knows, forgets, and pays attention. In addition, emotional characteristics include calm, happiness, affection, submission and trembling, fear, envy, and pride.⁶⁰ The heart has various layers, including *Sadr*, *Qalb*, *Fu'ad*, and *al-Lubb*.⁶¹ These layers show the hearts cognitive and emotional qualities, and the deeper you go, the closer you are to a relationship with God and the closer you get to evil. One example is *fu'ad*, the second most profound dimension of the heart, the place of intuitive knowledge such as *ma'rifah* and inspiration, as shown by Musyahadah or *ru'ya*.⁶² While *lubb*, the most profound dimension, is a source of knowledge and monotheism. *Nafs muthmainnah* resides here because there is no gap for evil.⁶³

⁵⁵ Atsiruddin, *Tafsir Babrul Muhibh*, 294.

⁵⁶ Ahmad Mustafa Al-Maraghi, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*, Vol.1 (Egypt: Syrkah Maktabah Mustafa, 1431), 106.

⁵⁷ Imam Naisaburi, *Tafsir Al-Basith*, Volume 2 (Saudi: Umadah Bahts Ilmi, 1435), 450.

⁵⁸ Raghīb Isfahani, *Al-Mufradat Fi Al-Gharib Al-Qur'an* (Damsyiq: Dar al Qalam, 1431), 578.

⁵⁹ Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulumuddin*, Juz 3 (Beirut: Dar Ma'arif, 1431), 4.

⁶⁰ Ismail, *Menalar Makna Berpikir Dalam Al-Qur'an*, 39.

⁶¹ Muhammad bin Ali Ar-Tirmidzi, *Bayan Al-Farq Baina as-Shadr, Al-Qalb, Al-Fu'ad Wa Al-Lubb* (Aman, Jordan: : Muasasah Al Bait Al Mulkiyah lil fikr al islami, 2009), 4.

⁶² Muhammad bin Ali Ar-Tirmidzi, 26.

⁶³ Muhammad bin Ali Ar-Tirmidzi, 31.

According to the Islamic philosophers Ibn Sina and Al-Farabi, the soul is the mind that operates in the body.⁶⁴ Scientist Ar-Razi describes the soul as tendencies, desires, predispositions, or drives.⁶⁵ In addition, the founder of the illumination philosophy, Suhrawardi, describes the soul as an entity trapped in the body, seeking to return to the higher realm of the *malakut*.⁶⁶ The author finds similarities in the soul of these various explanations: it is a substance that has *ghiroh*, or desire, and *azzām*, as Isfahani said, in an epistemological sense.⁶⁷ With this *Ghiroh*, Suhrawardi shows that the soul is trying to return to its natural state, namely the relationship with God. *Jihād nafs* is an effort to return the soul to nature, producing soul levels such as *nafs amārah*, *nafs lawāmmah* and *nafs mutmainnah*. *Nafs Mutmainnah* is a mental condition that changes every time a person's efforts or *jihad* go up and down.⁶⁸

Al-Attas defines the concept of «*aql*» as «binding» or «withholding».⁶⁹ He describes the heart as the binding force of knowledge.⁷⁰ which this mind can function, including the heart and brain (*dimagh*), or in Islam, according to Al-Attas, reason means *reason* and *intellect*.⁷¹ This is where the structure of Muslim thought differs from the West. In Islam, complex thinking, or what is called

⁶⁴ Rahmat Ardi Nur Rira Da'i Jarman Arroisi, "Konsep Jiwa Menurut Ibnu Sina," *Islamica: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2023, 18.

⁶⁵ Jarman Arroisi, "Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi's Perspective Theory of the Soul: Study of Islamic Psychological Thought Models," *Sunan Ampel State Islamic University Surabaya* chapt (2016): 22.

⁶⁶ Muhammad Natsir, "Comparison of Ibn Sina's and Suhrawardi's Thoughts: (Examination of Emanation Theory and Soul Theory)," *Wahana Akademika: Journal of Islamic and Social Studies* 1, no. 2 (2014): 202.

⁶⁷ Natsir, 681.

⁶⁸ Abdallah Rothman and Adrian Coyle, "Toward a Framework for Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy: An Islamic Model of the Soul," *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 5 (2018): 9, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-018-0651-x>.

⁶⁹ Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib. *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995, 148–149..

⁷⁰ Ismail, *Menalar Makna Berpikir Dalam Al-Qur'an*, 57.

⁷¹ Moh.Isom Mudin and Andin Desnafitri, "Al-Attas on Intellect and Its Relevance to The Islamization of Knowledge: Sufism Philosophical Approach," 7.

higher-order thinking, cannot be considered if humans think only with their physical minds or rationality, without considering their spiritual dimension, namely the heart.

The meaning and concept of *aqal*, *qalb* and *nafs*» above shows the relationship between rationality, spirituality, and religiosity in Islam. According to Islamic beliefs, the lower intellect, or lower intellect, is located in the brain and is responsible for what is considered rational in Western cognitive processes, including evaluation, critical thinking, and creativity. The objectives of this physical minds thinking are sensory and empirical.⁷² Suppose empirical research is carried out on this perception of rationality. In that case, it can arrive at a spiritual perception if it reflects on and contemplates reality, namely through philosophical questions such as the purpose of the existence of everything or the meaning of life, etc. As Abu Hayyan said, if the brain is damaged, this will impact the intellectual or cognitive nature of the heart, where faith and knowledge are centered.⁷³

The Unity of Knowledge in Islam: Balancing the Rational and the Spiritual Dimensions

When studying the scientific qualities of previous scholars in religion and science, they had an epistemological understanding of the unity of science. What was not found at that time was the dichotomy between religious sciences and general sciences, or, as Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (1921-1986) called it, the unity of knowledge, which implies that Islam has never known a clash between religion and science, rationality and religiosity, as is happening in the modern world today.⁷⁴

⁷² Moh.Isom Mudin and Andin Desnafitri, "Al-Attas on Intellect and It Is Relevance to The Islamization of Knowledge: Sufism Philosophical Approach," 12.

⁷³ Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi, *Minhaj: Berislam Dari Ritual Hingga Intelektual* (Jakarta: INSIST, 2020), 198.

⁷⁴ Mohammad Muslih, Heru Wahyudi, and Amir Reza Kusuma. "Integration of Science and Religion According to Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas and Ian

Even the concept of *'aqal*, or what the West calls the *mind* in Islam, refers not only to *reason* (cognitive) and *intellect* (intuitive). This shows a principle of balance between the physical and metaphysical, the world and the afterlife, and the empirical and the non-empirical in Islam. So, the characteristics or *Minhaj* of Muslim thinking are characteristic *theology (integral)*⁷⁵ This principle of unity or integration in the Islamic context combines the trilogy of Faith, Knowledge, and Charity. In understanding, one of them is related to the other two and depends on each other.⁷⁶

From this different understanding, classifying rationality is, in essence, correct and appropriate behavior by the ontology of reality and logical truth.⁷⁷ In ontology, this reality, also in the Islamic context, requires an approach *irfāni* not only *burhāni*, namely providing a portion of intuitive knowledge in the search for truth and methods of thinking as offered by the Illumination Philosophy of Suhrawardi and the German philosopher Husserl.⁷⁸

After selection, the critical thinking teaching approach model with its philosophy is criticized, and then elements from Islam can be adopted into the Islamic scientific treasury. Why is it necessary to integrate p4c to learn critical thinking? Because the approach uses philosophy that touches on non-physical, supra-rational, and metaphysical areas. Curricula that might be included in this philosophical approach are metaphysics, epistemology, concepts, and ethics. The method used is a dialogue with Islamic value standards, and there are also limitations in inquiry, such as the substance of Allah. Likewise, we need to return philosophy to the curriculum. This effort has been carried out since the 19th century,

G Barbour, "Journal of Medan Religion Research 13, no. 1 (2022): 29, <https://doi.org/10.58836/jpma.v13i1.11740>.

⁷⁵ Zarkasyi, *Minhaj: Berislam Dari Ritual Hingga Intelektual*, p. 214.

⁷⁶ Zarkasyi, 24.

⁷⁷ Muhammad Zainy Uthman, *Thinking Framework* (Kuala Lumpur: RZS-CASIS, 2020), 7.

⁷⁸ Muhammad Muslih, *Husserl & Suhrawardi's Model of Intuitive Knowledge* (Ponorogo: CIOS, 2010), 19.

as was done by Jalaludin al-Afghani and then Muhammad Abduh in Egypt, who attempted to revive the rational side of science (*rational science*), in Malay literature. This kind of thing is done by Hamka, Sheikh Ahmad Al Hadi, Zaba, and Al Attas, and contemporary thinking active on this matter is S.H Nasr.⁷⁹ They support a holistic approach in the Islamic tradition, combining revelation, reason, and experience as the basis for actual knowledge.⁸⁰ Pedagogical wisdom has also been practiced at IIUM Malaysia as a form of IOK's mission (*Islamization of Knowledge*), which can give birth to integrated ulama to produce *contemporary Islamic knowledge*.⁸¹

In a dialectical method like this, the combination of didactic methods is also necessary in Islam to address recognized differences in epistemology, such as the halaqah tradition, which uses a more didactic approach from a religious teacher because it sees several points in Islamic understanding as *muhakkamāt*. At the same time, text verses that are *mutaghayyirāt* are more widely interpreted. However, the dialectical approach can be applied across the entire scope of knowledge in Islam, including Aqidah in understanding *ilahiyāt*, *nubuwwāt*, and *sam'iyāt*. However, there are limits to this assumption. Likewise, in the realm of *fiqh* or Islamic sharia law, which can be taught to children using both dialectical and didactic approaches, because *fiqh* problems are more likely to be new problems in society, maybe you can use dialectics in understanding why there are laws for flogging, cutting off hands, etc., which easy

⁷⁹ Rosnani Hashim, *Revitalization of Philosophy and Philosophical Inquiry in Muslim Education* (Gombak: IIUM Press, 2017), 17.

⁸⁰ Mehdi ha'iri Yazdi, "The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy: Knowledge by Presence," *University of New York Press*, 1992, 37, <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.30-2609>.

⁸¹ Haneef, Mohamed Aslam Mohamed, & Amin, Ruzita Mohammad. Conceptual and Practical Dimensions of Islamization of Knowledge: A Case Study of the Economics Program at the IIUM. *American Journal of Islam and Society*, 1997; 14(2): 188–207. <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v14i2.2249>. See also at Hashim, Rosnani, & Ssekamanya, Siraje Abdallah. Islamization of Human Knowledge in Theory and Practice: Achievements, Challenges and Prospects in the IIUM Context. *IIUM Journal of Educational Studies*, 2013; 1(1–2). <https://doi.org/10.31436/ijes.v1i1-2.18>

for children to understand as a form of philosophical wisdom. A combination like this is because, in Islam, knowledge does not start from a conjecture/dhan like in the West but starts from something absolute. “*zālīkal-kitābu lā raiba fih, hudal lil-muttaqīn* « Meaning: This book (Al Quran) has no doubts about it; guidance for those who fear.⁸² Something text *muhakkāmat* remains a guide in all branches of science and does not allow reason to be free in making assumptions. This recognition of Islamic epistemology and the way of thinking in Islam is also integral, namely the empirical and spiritual dimensions that complement each other in justifying a persons perception or assumption regarding a religious or social problem.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Matthew Lipman's concept of multidimensional thinking in Philosophy for Children (P4C) offers a valuable framework for developing critical, creative, and caring thinking. However, from an Islamic perspective, it becomes evident that Lipman's model still lacks the transcendent dimension that connects the intellect to divine consciousness. Islam views thinking not merely as an intellectual exercise but as a holistic act involving the integration of reason (‘aql), heart (qalb), and soul (nafs). Therefore, while P4C provides a strong foundation for cultivating higher-order thinking, it requires a complementary spiritual dimension to achieve a truly comprehensive human formation.

In Islamic epistemology, the unity of knowledge (tawhīd al-‘ilm) emphasizes that rational, ethical, and spiritual faculties must work harmoniously. The mind must be guided by the heart, and both must be directed toward truth as revealed by divine guidance. This unity prevents the fragmentation of knowledge that characterizes much of modern secular education. Hence, integrating Lipman's multidimensional thinking with Islamic

⁸² Qs. Surat-Al-Baqarah, n.d., ayat 2.

epistemological principles ensures that education not only sharpens reasoning but also nurtures moral awareness and spiritual depth. Such integration aligns with Islam's holistic vision of human perfection, where knowledge serves as a path toward ethical action and divine proximity.

Ultimately, this study affirms that the dialogue between Western educational philosophy and Islamic thought is both possible and productive. By adopting the strengths of P4C—its dialogical inquiry, democratic ethos, and emphasis on reflection—while embedding it within the Islamic understanding of intellect and spirituality, educators can develop a balanced pedagogical model. This model would cultivate critical reasoning without detaching it from faith and morality. In essence, multidimensional thinking inspired by Islam transforms education into a means of harmonizing knowledge, virtue, and faith, thus realizing the true purpose of learning as an act of worship and self-perfection.[]

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